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A REPLY TO LORD ROBERT CECIL

BY JAMES M. BECK

LORD ROBERT CECIL, Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, has made an unusual appeal to the American people in behalf of the League of Nations. His prominent position in the English Government and the conspicuous service he has rendered to his country in the conduct of its foreign relations in the last five years give to his statement peculiar significance.

As Minister of Blockade, it was his delicate task to combat the nagging objections which the Wilson Administration in the period of American neutrality made to the Allies' blockade of Germany, and he handled a situation of extraordinary difficulty with exceptional tact and skill.

In all these negotiations, it was evident that he followed the policy of his distinguished father, Lord Salisbury, who as Prime Minister was disposed to make any reasonable sacrifice to maintain harmonious relations with the United States. As an able and far-sighted statesman, he appreciated, both before and during the present World War, that the best hope of the world lies in the *rapprochement* of the two great divisions of the English-speaking race.

In a formal statement given from Paris on June 2nd, Lord Robert, evidently fearful that the Senate of the United States may not ratify the League of Nations in its present form, appeals to the American people in the following gracious phrases:

I see it suggested in some places that the United States should not accept membership in the League of Nations because it might involve some sacrifice of national sovereignty. It would be foolish to deny that if nations are to make any organization for peace each of them must be content to modify in some degree, however slight, its liberty of action. That is the inevitable result of coöperation, and I do not wish to underrate the sacrifice involved. . . .

The United States, as some people are never tired of reminding us, came into the war at a comparatively late period, and, though she threw her whole heart into the struggle and spared no effort to victory, it necessarily followed that her actual sacrifices, both in men and material, were less than fell to the lot of some of her associates. On the other hand, she declared at her entry that she sought no profit, either territorially or otherwise, and that declaration she has fulfilled. I doubt if there is any example in history of a nation, which has taken part in a struggle of comparable magnitude, which has at the end asked for no direct national reward. Yet America may feel that she has done this. That her national interests in the widest sense have been neglected is not true, for the greatest national interest of every civilized State is peace. America has striven for peace, but it has been peace without material reward. She has sought no territorial aggrandizement and no financial advantage.

That is the glorious record, of which, if envy between our countries were possible, I should be envious. *It would indeed be deplorable if, at the end of the conference, something happened to mar this record.*

Guarded as his language is, the implication is unmistakable. It assumes that the refusal of the United States Senate to accept membership for America in the League of Nations would in a moral sense mar her record, and thus make her part in the great struggle less creditable and honorable.

We are left to conjecture what prompted this appeal to the American people. It cannot be doubted that more than one-third of the United States Senate does not look with favor upon the League of Nations covenant in its present form. If ratification is finally secured, with or without amendment, it will unquestionably be an unwilling assent that the Senate will thus give to a final and fatal sacrifice of those great traditional policies, to which America was dedicated from its birth and under which she has grown to be one of the master states of the world.

Lord Robert's appeal to the American people is plainly actuated by fear that the United States Senate may prefer the tried traditions of the Republic to the illusory pretensions of the proposed League of Nations. While he is a skilled diplomat and most guarded in his language, it can hardly be disguised that his formal statement is either an appeal over the heads of the United States Senate to the American people, or an appeal to the Senate itself not to "mar" America's record in the war. In either aspect, its wisdom can well be questioned.

Lord Robert should have taken warning from President Wilson's similar appeal to the Italian people. Its success was not conspicuous. It is true that Lord Robert sustains the position of President Wilson, and may justify his intervention in American affairs on that ground; but he should remember that President Wilson's function with reference to the negotiation of a treaty with the Central Powers will end, at least for the time being, when Germany accepts the treaty, and it is formally submitted to the Senate, whose duty will then begin to determine, as the final treaty-making power in the United States, whether it will accept the result of President Wilson's negotiations. In that conflict of opinion, which may develop into a grave constitutional crisis, no foreign statesman can wisely take part.

Downing Street may not even now fully appreciate the real nature of the treaty-making power in the United States. At one time it was apparently of opinion that the President was the sole treaty-making power and that the Senate was morally bound to ratify that which the President negotiated in the name of America. Perhaps it was encouraged in this erroneous view of the Federal Constitution by President Wilson's academic discourses on the Constitution in his *Constitutional Government in the United States*, in which he taught the thus misguided undergraduates of Princeton that the power of the Senate in the matter of treaties was more nominal than real. He said:

The President cannot conclude a treaty with a foreign Power without the consent of the Senate, but he may guide every step of diplomacy; and to guide diplomacy *is to determine what treaties must be made*, if the faith and prestige of the Government are to be maintained. He need disclose no step of a negotiation until it is complete; and, when in any critical matter it is completed, *the Government is virtually committed*. Whatever its disinclination, the Senate may feel itself committed also.

Both President Wilson and his confreres at Paris have discovered that such is not the fact, and that the Senate of the United States will not in this crisis so easily surrender its high prerogative to determine the foreign policy of the nation.

Even now it is still assumed by many, even in America, that the President and the Senate are equal powers in the conduct of America's foreign relations. While the initia-

tive in diplomatic negotiations is given to the President, yet he can only act "with the advice and consent of the Senate," and this obviously means, however precedent may have temporarily increased the Presidential prerogative, that the authoritative voice, at least in any final decision, is that of the Senate.

The Senate is thus the dominant force in the treaty-making power; for, if I instruct my agent to draft a document subject to my "advice and consent," can it be questioned who has the greater voice?

I shall not discuss the very disputable question whether the proposed League of Nations will make for the peace of the world or whether the participancy of the United States in its Executive Council would be either for the good of the United States or for the welfare of the League. I content myself with saying that the developments of the Paris Conference do not justify the hope that the admission of America into the somewhat discordant family of European nations would serve the cause of peace. The attempt of the American peace representatives to determine the future of Fiume, Dantzic and Shantung has neither helped America nor her Allies. Would not our Allies have made a speedier and better peace if America had followed her traditional policy of "minding her own business" by refusing to take part at the Peace Conference in any questions that were peculiarly European or Asiatic?

My only purpose is to discuss briefly the possible effect of the League of Nations upon Anglo-American solidarity. Lord Robert would undoubtedly agree that the best hope of mankind lies in the *rapprochement* of England and America, and I use the word, not in its broader sense of a reconciliation—for, fortunately, there is nothing to be reconciled—but in its narrower sense of a "coming together" in sympathy and interest. Such was undoubtedly the opinion of Sir Robert's illustrious father, one of the greatest and most far-seeing Prime Ministers who ever presided in Downing Street. He believed that England should make every reasonable sacrifice to retain the good-will of the United States.

With this in mind, the Marquis of Salisbury refused to quarrel with the United States over the Venezuelan controversy, and later in 1898 refused to enter into any European coalition to defend Spain.

Thus began the *rapprochement* of England and America. Notwithstanding some minor discords, which must in some way be resolved into fuller harmonies, great progress was made in the development of an Anglo-American *entente*, and this movement finally received an enormous impetus, that otherwise a century could not have given to it, in the mutual appreciation and understanding of the World War. No one can question the whole-hearted sympathy of the American people for the cause of the Allies, or its admiration for England's part in the great tournament of the nations. The reception, which Balfour received when he came to America, did not differ from the popular triumph accorded to Joffre and Viviani. Last December, a thousand American cities and communities united in a tribute of respect and admiration for England's part in the war. Such a popular demonstration of appreciative admiration would not have been possible five years before.

If Lord Robert should visit America—and he or any of his associates in Downing Street would be most welcome—he would find that the proposed League of Nations is slowly undermining the Anglo-American *entente*. There is in America a growing sense of irritation that she should be forever entangled by the proposed League in the spider-web of European politics. This does not mean that the American people desire to resume a policy of isolation, which in fact they abandoned twenty years ago when they declared war against Spain and took permanent possession of the Philippines. It is a common error to suppose that America has no choice except between two alternatives,—the one a hermit-like isolation, and the other, complete participation in world politics by membership in the League. There is a middle course which retains independence without isolation. It recognizes that America, as one of the master states of the world, and potentially the most powerful, should assume responsibilities in civilization and should not restrict its political activities to the Western Hemisphere. Many thoughtful Americans believe, however, that this responsibility can be met without sacrificing the independence of America, and they believe that America will render its greatest service to the world, if it is allowed to express its opinion as an independent and impartial state, as each crisis in civilization arises. America's

influence will also be greater if in international affairs it reserves its judgment for the very great questions, which affect all civilization, and does not take part in every local dispute between nations, such as the Fiume controversy, or that with respect to Teschen or the Banat of Temesvar. This influential class of Americans believe that for many reasons America cannot take part to any advantage, either to itself or to civilization, in questions that are primarily of European or Asiatic origin, and that, if it attempts to do so,—as has been done in its name at the Paris Conference in the cases of Fiume, Dantzic and Shantung—it can only dissipate the immense moral influence which America would otherwise have.

These views are not held in America by the enemies of England, but by many of her warmest friends. Many of the most distinguished proponents in America of the League of Nations were formerly either pro-German or, in any event, pacifists, who ardently supported President Wilson's policy of neutrality. On the other hand, the opponents of the proposed League are mainly those who from the beginning of the war advocated the participation of America on the side of the Allies.

The sense of irritation, with which many good Americans view the "entangling alliance" of the League, is likely to grow in the immediate future, and it can only be hoped that it will only be temporary and that the potent tie of blood-comradeship in arms will overcome the growing feeling of irritation which the discussion has brought about.

If Lord Robert and his confrères in Downing Street value above every other result of the war the Anglo-American *entente*, let them consider, before it is too late, the effect upon Anglo-American relations of a grudging ratification of the League of Nations by the United States Senate. It cannot be questioned that a majority of the United States Senate look upon the League with disfavor. Indeed, if it were not for the natural desire of the Democratic members of the Senate to sustain the policies of the Administration, especially on the eve of a Presidential election, it can hardly be questioned that an overwhelming majority of the Senate, representing both parties, would refuse to accept membership for America in the League of Nations.

As I write, it is altogether probable that, unless the League is amended and Article 10 is eliminated or radically modified, the proposed League will not secure the assent of the requisite two-thirds, or even a majority, of the Senate. It is not difficult to imagine the deep irritation that will result on both sides of the Atlantic if America rejects the League of Nations. While its own representatives proposed the League at Paris, they did so without any mandate from the American people and in the teeth of an overwhelming vote last November, with which the American people refused to give a blank power of attorney to President Wilson to carry out his peace policies.

Let us assume that in view of the present crisis in civilization the Senate in the supposed interest of peace ratifies the League. In my judgment, no greater harm could result to Anglo-American unity than such reluctant assent. The Senate would in that event accept a League of Nations which more than one-third of its membership have already denounced, not because they believed it was for the good of America, but solely because it had been so interwoven in the Peace Treaty that it could not be rejected on its merits without prolonging the agony of the world. In that event, the Senate would bitterly resent the fact that their high prerogative was virtually destroyed by the ingenious device of so interweaving the Peace Treaty with the League of Nations that the duress of events deprived the Senate of its ordinary freedom of decision.

Even assuming that a majority of the American people favor this course, is it not probable that when the League of Nations begins to function and America finds itself entangled in far removed controversies, in which it has little sympathy and even less interest, that there will be a great reaction against the League of Nations? In that event the cause of Anglo-American unity will suffer a fatal setback, for the impression is unfortunately widespread in America that the League is of British origin. Thoughtful Americans know better and fully realize that this misbegotten venture has its true source in the very pacifist movement in America, that did all it could to keep America from any participation in the World War.

The present policy of the British Government may meet a temporary emergency; but it seems to me short-sighted. It invites the hostility of America and not its friendship. If

the League of Nations had never been proposed, America would have been a sincere friend and in important crises a useful ally to Great Britain and France. The folly of the dog who dropped the bone to grasp at its reflection in the water, is repeated in England's and France's effort to tie America by parchment and red seals in an alliance which can only convert a willing friend into an unwilling partner. The United States will render a greater service to the cause of civilization, if its service be voluntary and not a matter of contractual obligation.

That a European League of Nations is a desirable thing is probably true, and that the United States should from time to time coöperate with it in preserving the peace of the world, is equally clear; but I am satisfied that the American people will render a greater service and have a greater moral influence, if it determines its course as each crisis in civilization arises, and as an impartial and independent arbiter.

The immense moral influence that the United States had in the World War, even in the days of its neutrality, was due to the fact that it viewed the great controversy from a detached position and in an impartial spirit. Its judgment in the future will have greater force if it preserve that position of independence and impartiality, than if it impairs its influence by taking part, as a member of the League, and one of the self-constituted "voting trust" of Five Nations, in the inevitable intrigues between nations, to which that League will necessarily give rise, with reference to purely European and Asiatic questions.

The proposal of a League of Nations postponed peace and aggravated by inordinate delay the present anarchy in civilization; but also gave rise among the Allies to a disunity in spirit if not in aims, which otherwise would never have existed. Only Germany is whole-heartedly in favor of it. Certainly she would be the greatest beneficiary. She clamors for admission into the League as the most hopeful method of dividing the Allies by intrigue.

When the armistice was signed, a great majority of the American people would have welcomed the recognition of an *entente* between Great Britain, France, Italy and the United States; but, instead of such an *entente*, a misguided attempt was made to draw the United States into an obligatory covenant, which sought to compel it with little com-

pensatory advantage to underwrite the territorial boundaries and political independence of possibly all the nations in the world.

Undoubtedly, when the covenant of the League was first proposed, a large majority of the American people favored it in principle. It appealed to them because the idea was a big one and because it was inspired by a great ideal; for America, notwithstanding its material interests, is a nation of idealists. But, as soon as the plan was studied in the concrete, thousands of thoughtful Americans, remembering the most sacred traditions of our country, under which we had grown and prospered, deeply resented an indefinite and entangling alliance with all the nondescript nations of the world.

If I had the child-like faith which enables some to believe that the League of Nations will bring about a durable peace with justice throughout the world, then I could reconcile myself to the disadvantages which I have suggested; for such a peace is so great a *desideratum* that there is no sacrifice in reason that any nation can make that it should not make. Believing, as I do, that the League will be ineffective for that purpose, and rather tends to cause wars than to prevent them, I can only regret that the moral value of America's verdict will, in future crises of civilization, be greatly impaired by such participation in the purely local politics of Europe and those of the Far East as we have witnessed in the Peace Conference.

The future relations of England and America depend less upon written treaties and formal covenants than upon mutual appreciation and understanding. The potent sentiment of loyalty to the great destinies of the English-speaking race will do more to keep Great Britain and the United States in friendly coöperation than the artificial covenants of any league. The latter may mar, they cannot make, an Anglo-American Entente.

Lord Robert admits that America made great sacrifices in this war without asking for any material return. He truly says that such a course of altruism is without precedent in the world's history. Perhaps he does not wholly realize the extent of America's sacrifices. It is not alone that three hundred thousand of our soldiers were either killed or wounded or that we have saddled upon future generations of Americans a stupendous debt, which is likely to amount

to thirty billions of dollars before the debts of the war are fully paid; but, in a manner that Lord Robert cannot fully appreciate, our institutions have suffered a serious impairment.

The greatest of America's traditions was its detachment from European intrigue, which enabled it to pursue its own path and to decide successive crises free from the embarrassment of entangling alliances.

An American may well ask: "Why should America make this final sacrifice? How will it 'mar its record' of disinterested service, if, asking nothing for itself in return for immeasurable sacrifices, it now declines to turn its back forever upon the great tradition of independence in world affairs, which it owes to its Founder, George Washington, and in which every American statesman and party consistently concurred until Mr. Wilson became President?"

As an American, who from the beginning of the World War believed in the cause of the Allies and America's duty to participate, I cannot believe in such abandonment of her tried policies. I am not an advocate of isolation. America's place will always be by the side of the liberal democracies of the world. So believing, I look with apprehension upon this misguided attempt of doctrinaire statesmen to draw America into an impossible and "entangling alliance" with many nations, liberal and illiberal, hostile and friendly. I prefer President Washington's definition of our foreign policy to that of President Wilson. So finally will America decide, and in so doing will not "mar" her glorious "record."

JAMES M. BECK.